

FOR RELEASE: January 17, 2001

Paul Introduces Bold Measure to Protect Privacy and Stop Identity Theft

Washington, D.C.- Congressman Ron Paul, acting quickly during the first days of the new Congress, introduced sweeping legislation aimed at eliminating widespread government privacy abuses and curbing identity theft. The Identity Theft Prevention Act (HR 220) will halt the misuse of Social Security numbers by the federal government, while also providing all Americans a fresh start with regard to their own personal and financial privacy. "The federal government is by far the worst violator of our privacy," Paul stated. "My bill was introduced to reverse the terrible trend toward a government surveillance society." More specifically, the Act forbids the use of Social Security numbers by any federal agency other than the Social Security administration. 65 years ago, millions of Americans believed FDR when he assured an anxious nation that "only you and the Social Security administration will ever know your private Social Security number." Today, the impact of that lie is felt by every American who applies for a job, opens a bank account, obtains a driving license, or even visits their doctor. Thanks to Congress, Social Security numbers now are used by virtually all federal, state, and local governments as a *de facto*

national ID. The worst abuser is the IRS, which illegitimately uses Social Security numbers as a taxpayer ID and requires the registration of infants before parents may claim a dependent deduction! Paul's legislation will forbid the IRS or any other federal agency from using Social Security numbers for purposes unrelated to the administration of Social Security benefits. The Act also places the same prohibition on state and local governments. Furthermore, the Act requires the Social Security administration to offer every American a new Social Security number within the next five years. This provision is needed because the government has permitted widespread dissemination of private numbers. Unscrupulous persons easily can obtain a victim's Social Security number and access bank accounts, obtain credit cards, and assume a false identity. Many Americans have lost their life savings as a result of identity theft, yet the government continues to allow widespread misuse of Social Security numbers. The confidentiality of existing numbers has been destroyed; they are available in far too many government and private databases. A clean slate is required to provide Americans real personal and financial privacy. The new numbers issued by the Social Security administration will be strictly confidential; all accrued retirement benefits will be transferred to the new number. "It's time to start over with regard to Social Security numbers in this country," Paul concluded. "The government has broken its promise of confidentiality, resulting in the steady erosion of personal privacy and the rise in identity theft. The government has no business creating a national ID number for human beings, and the resulting Orwellian abuses have been all too predictable. It's time to restore privacy by requiring the government to keep Social Security numbers strictly confidential."

